

March 4, 2005

The Honorable Judd Gregg
393 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kent Conrad
530 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Gregg and Conrad:

On behalf of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition and the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our deep concern about the impact of President Bush's proposed budget, and to urge you to do all you can to assure that the budget ultimately approved by Congress does not cause severe, long term harm to children, young people and families in this country.

The federal budget is not just an accounting tool. It is a statement about our priorities and our values as a nation. With this proposed budget, the President is clearly setting his priorities, which are completely out-of-step with the priorities of hard-working Americans struggling to make ends meet.

The President's budget represents the wrong priorities for America. It would:

- Cut Medicaid by at least \$45 billion in health care for low-income families and seniors over the next ten years;
- Cut Food Stamps for 200,000 to 300,000 individuals in working families;
- End the federal guarantee of help to provide abused and neglected children safe foster homes and threatens critical protections for these children;
- Cut 25,000 children from Head Start and Early Head Start, with an additional 90,000 children cut by 2010.
- Cut childcare assistance to 300,000 children by 2009.

Moreover, domestic appropriated programs (non-entitlement programs) will bear the brunt of domestic cuts, sustaining a total of \$214 billion in cuts over the next five years. Funding for juvenile justice prevention and intervention programs, which in FY06 alone is cut by 46%, would be decimated under these long-term cuts.

These cuts are not only draconian and harmful, they are unnecessary. They will place an intolerable burden on states and working families, and children will be the losers. Funding for Head Start, health care, foster care, mental health services, and childcare assistance are vital to the most minimal well being of our children. Without a basic safety net and vital services, children will increasingly fall through the cracks and be drawn into a pipeline that leads to alienation, failure, dropping out, and – ultimately – more youths entering the juvenile justice system.

Congress must not place the burden of deficit reduction on low-income families and children while refusing to raise revenues. Doing so only increases the likelihood that

hundreds of thousands of children will not be able to transition successfully to adulthood and will be sentenced instead to lives of wasted potential, incarceration and even death. There is too much at stake, now and in the future, to let this happen.

On behalf of children, youths, and families, we ask for your assistance at this critical time. We ask that you:

1. Oppose cuts to vital domestic programs, whether they be direct cuts or indirect reductions through block grants, entitlement caps, or global spending caps;
2. Prevent procedural maneuvers through a budget resolution or through budget reconciliation instructions that will force such cuts to occur over the long term; and
3. Insist upon a balanced approach to budget deficit reduction.

If we can provide you any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Morna Murray, Children's Defense Fund, 202-662-3577 or Tim Briceland-Betts, Child Welfare League of America, 202-942-0256. Thank you.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Correctional Association
American Counseling Association
American Psychiatric Association
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Children & Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Church Women United
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ
Justice Policy Institute
Juvenile Law Center
National Association of School Psychology
National Network for Youth
National Mental Health Association
National Juvenile Defender Center
National Recreation and Park Association
Physicians for Human Rights
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office
School Social Work Association of America
The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and The Million Mom March
Women of Reform Judaism

State/Regional Organizations

Center for Children's Advocacy, University of Connecticut School of Law
Child and Family Services of New Hampshire
Children's Law Center of Massachusetts
Judicial Circuit
Juvenile Division, Montgomery County, Ohio Public Defender's Office
Juvenile Division, Office of the Circuit Public Defender of Georgia, Stone Mountain
Juvenile Justice Center of Suffolk University Law School
Juvenile Justice Coalition of Ohio
Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center
Mississippi Center for Justice
New Jersey Office of the Child Advocate
North American Family Institute, Northern Division
Northeast Juvenile Defender Center
Northwest Juvenile Defender Center
StandDown Texas Project
Virginia Juvenile Justice Association

cc: Senate Budget Committee members